

Statement of Congressman Jim Matheson
House Financial Services Committee
Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity
Hearing on the Samaritan Initiative
July 13, 2004

Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding this important hearing today regarding HR 4057, the Samaritan Initiative Act. I appreciate your consideration of this bill and the leadership of the bill's sponsor, Congressman Renzi of Arizona.

I'm very pleased to see the progress being made today, with respect to ending homelessness among our nation's veterans. I was compelled to support the Samaritan Initiative after meeting with a veterans group in my home state of Utah.

The Homeless Veterans Fellowship of Utah works to end chronic homelessness and already has a proven track record in assisting veterans. I'd like to read a few words from the director of this program, Mr. John Vickroy, as they illustrate my reasons for supporting this initiative.

"It is gratifying to note that the purposes mentioned in the first section are what Homeless Veterans Fellowship has been about for the past 15 years. During the past 6 years we have been steadily improving in our programs with steadily increasing success.

During 2003, of the homeless veterans who entered HVF's transitional housing program, 74% left HVF with an income, permanent housing, and 18 months of follow-on counseling services. As addressed in the bill, permanent affordable housing is a key element in the equation to address chronic homelessness."

I am very encouraged by the Fellowship's success and I hope that by enacting this legislation, Congress will be able to help other communities address this important problem.

Again, Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding this hearing today regarding the Samaritan Initiative. I look forward to hearing the testimony of the witnesses.